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The Orthodox Herald

Celebrating our 40th year

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ST. NICHOLAS

In most countries, sometime between 5 December and 7 January, a red-robed and white-bearded figure is to be found distributing gifts from a bottomless sack. Because of a kind heart and giving spirit, St. Nicholas early became associated with the gift-custom. One of the most popular saints, he is patron of sailors, bakers, merchants, Russian (along with St. Andrew) and especially children.

The little that is known of his life says he was Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor. He was born in Patara sometime in the 300s. He made a pilgrimage to Egypt and Palestine, the Holy Lands. He was imprisoned during the time of the persecution of Christians by Diocletian and released under Constantine. He attended the Council of Nicea in the year 325 which promulgated the Nicene Creed which we recite at each Divine Liturgy as our Symbol of Faith. He is designated as a Wonderworker by the Church because he was favored by God with the power of performing miracles.

The Tropar and Kondak for the day, which are hymns which precis the life of the saint of the day, tell us that the holiness of his life was set before his flock as an example of faith, meekness and temperance. That he proved himself in Myra to be a priest, a servant of divine things and that he fulfilled the gospel of Christ by giving up his life for his people and by saving the innocent from death. He was sainted because he was a great guide towards the things of God.

Much of Europe observes December 6/19, the date of the Saint's death, as a special holiday. In some countries, men in bishop's robes pose as St. Nicholas. They visit children, examine them on their prayers, urge them to be good and give them gifts.

Although we read much about St. Nicholas and Santa Claus being one and the same, we always considered them two different persons. There was always a distinction in even our childhood that St. Nicholas was real and that Santa Claus was mythical. So it was not

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When shadows seek to cross my path
blocking His sun rays,
I turn my thoughts to blessings given
and lift my heart in praise.

LOOK TO THE GLORY

Many times we hear that prayer is talking with God. But this definition lacks completeness. Prayer is communion with God by which we recognize His sovereignty is a definition which is more satisfactory. The value of prayer does not consist in our getting something from God; but in our gaining a hold upon God Himself by the habit of mind which is generated within us by His bounty in supplying our needs. In Orthodoxy communion with God and not answers to prayers is the main reason for praying.

However, we must not think that God cannot, or will not, answer any prayer because He seems to let it go by. Every prayer, prayed in union with Him, has stirred the depths of the Divine heart, and is treasured there for an eternal response. Our prayers go ringing on in the ear of God till they are accomplished in the gifts of eternity.

Blessed are those prayers which seem to have no answer, if they obtain for us more worthy penitence, more trustful patience, more spiritual contemplation. But results such as these will surely come if we are praying through the meditation of Christ and His holy saints.

We must not think that we can ever command the vision of God. It will come to us at His own time, it may be longer or shorter, but if we watch for it, it will certainly illuminate our understanding. It is a great thing when the understanding is illuminated, even to behold the possibility of the Divine light, and to see that we are in the dark, and that we need the power.

When through God's grace we are conscious of darkness, when we know that there is something wanting in us, and identify it, we have made the first step. Instead of being disheartened that we do not experience the illumination that we long for, we should be very thankful that

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ST. JOSEPH IN TURMOIL

Times of personal crises may be the last thing on your mind this Christmas. You want to be in a festive mood. But times of personal crises are part of the stuff of life. You may be fortunate enough not to be facing one this Christmas or you may be right in the middle of a set of circumstances that has you in turmoil. You may well ask yourself how you can face the situation.

We don't think about it in this way, but St. Joseph, perhaps one of the most neglected personalities in the Christmas story, also faced a crisis. Joseph, a man of few words, never speaks on the pages of Scripture and soon after the account about the Birth of Jesus, he disappears from the pages altogether. Other than a few obscure mentions here and there, we don't know anything more about him.

But if there is a summary of Joseph's life, it is that he quietly submitted to the will of God. Everytime God's angel appears and asks him to do something, he does it. He acts in accordance with the will of God without asking questions or complaining.

The birth of the Lord Jesus was the climax of what we would now consider a prolonged crisis in Joseph's life.

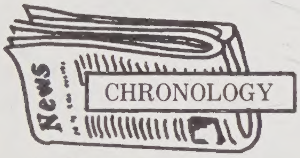
He had come to love Mary, his betrothed. Betrothal was far more binding in the first century than engagement today. It was an agreement made in the presence of witnesses and usually lasted for twelve months. From that time on, the man and woman were legally bound together. According to Deut 22:23, unfaithfulness on the part of the betrothed woman was punishable by death.

Early in the betrothal period word got back to Joseph that his wife-to-be was pregnant. They had not lived together. They had not seen each other for three or four months because Mary had been visiting her cousin Elizabeth.

Joseph was thrown into a crisis. What should he do? He knew that he was not the father. While he agonized, many solutions must have gone through his mind. In Matt 1:19 we read what he decided to

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INSTALLED IN CONSTANTINOPLE as the 270th Ecumenical Patriarch was Bartholomeos (Archontonis), Metropolitan of Chalcedon. Born in March 12, 1940 on the island of Imbros, Turkey, he was ordained a priest in 1969, consecrated bishop on December 25, 1973. He graduated from Halki Seminary in Turkey in 1961 and received a doctorate in Canon Law from the Gregorian Institute in Rome, Italy. He worked on the staff of the late Patriarch Dimitrios.

A FIRST was the visit of a ruling Patriarch of Russia to the U.S. in November. Patriarch Alexy II (Rediger) was born in 1929 in Tallin, Estonia. He was ordained a priest on April 17, 1950 and consecrated a bishop on September 3, 1961, elevated to Patriarchate on May 28, 1990. He holds a doctorate in Theology, St. Petersburg, Russia.

REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR, December 7, it will be 50 years since the bombing in Hawaii and the beginning of World War II.

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH Patriarch has called on all Orthodox Churches in Romania to break off relations with the Vatican until Pope John Paul shows a change of attitude towards proselytism and Uniatism.

A BILLY GRAHAM rally in New Jersey in September was used to reach out to fallen-away Catholics and potential Catholics. Two Catholic prelates enlisted counselers to follow up with people who came forward at the services and indicated they were interested in the Catholic Church.

THE CHURCH YEAR — 7500 — started on September 1/14.

THE NUNS at The Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, R.D. 1, Box 184X, Ellwood City, PA 16117 are continuing work on the addition to their building. At this time a new kitchen, prosphora bakery and refectory are being added. $200,000 is needed to complete the project.

THE COORDINATING COUNCIL of Orthodox People Together is compiling a directory of food banks, soup kitchens, ministry of legal aid, aid to elderly, homeless, imprisoned, home visitation, counseling, etc. run by Orthodox Christians. Contact Phil Tamoush, P.O. Box 1128, Torrance, CA 90505-0128 to be included.

ANGEL TREE, P.O. Box 17500, Washington, D.C. 20041-0500 is a project of Prison Fellowship that provides gifts for prisoners' children.

A FOUNDATION is being established by Mstislav Rostropovich, the Russian cellist and conductor and his wife, Galina Vishnevskaya to build a "Modern, fully equipped children's hospital in Moscow." They are holding several fund-raising concerts.

THE DON COSSACK CHORUS founded by Serge Jaroff is still performing. The 24-member chorus has just released a video tape - $22 and an audio cassette - $11. Write The Don Cossack Chorus, P.O. Box 1235, Montclair, NJ 07042 or call 201-746-8885.

THE BIBLE being distributed at the opening session of the Russian Parliament on Sept. 20 almost stopped the afternoon session. 6,000 New Testaments and Bibles and Children's Bibles were made available and were passed out to eager hands in a very short time.

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANT for research in any field of humanities or social sciences relating to Russia are being made available from The Kennan Institute of Advanced Russian Studies, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SE, Suite 704, Washington, DC 20024 or call (202) 387-3400.

THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION considers people low-income if they earn 150% or less of the poverty line set by the federal government. Anyone making less than $20,000 for a family of four fits this category. Consider this when attending your annual parish meeting.

THE 1992 WEEK OF PRAYER for Christian Unity in the U.S. has changed materials which will be used internationally. The committee in the U.S. has dropped the missionary concept because of concerns raised that the anniversary of Columbus' arrival in America ignores mistreatment of native peoples at the hands of some European missionaries. An ecumenical group from Bulgaria had selected Mt 28:19 as the 1992 theme. The U.S. group has substituted Mt 28:20.

IN PREPARATION FOR the 1992 Clergy-Laity Congress, the Greek Archdiocese is sending a 4-page, 28-question survey to various parishes and will make random telephone interviews to determine opinions and attitudes toward Church programs.

A BELL TOWER has been added to St. Eleftherios Church on West 24th Street between 8th and 9th Ave. in New York. This bell tower will house an elevator which will make the church accessible to the handicapped, the infirm and the aged. This idea combines function with aesthetics.

THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX LEAGUE has established a $50,000 Religious Education Fund to prepare and translate available material into Ukrainian for use in educating the youth of the Church in the Ukraine.

CHRISTIANS ARE LEAVING Jerusalem at such a rate that it is predicted that in 20 years there will not be any left. There were 40,000 Christians here at the end of the British mandate in 1948. The Christian Information Center put the figure at 11,756 in 1983 and the decline has continued.

PHOS is an inter-Orthodox ministry which helps Orthodox charities and missions in the USA and elsewhere. The latest project is to establish a retreat and monastic center in the Chicago area. For info or to help write: Phos Mission, 10716 South LaCrosse Ave., Oak Lawn, IL 6-453-5415.

SHARING

Are you so overwhelmed at times by the sense of loneliness, isolation, rejection, guilt or shame that you ask with the Psalmist: "Why are you so downcast, O my soul?"

Many people face similar sufferings and struggles, but we often live as if we are the only ones who experience the pain that is paralyzing us. We withdraw into ourselves, allowing our isolation to become more complete, and we feel that nobody cares.

We have to peek out of this condition and then we will begin to realize that our friends and family members also have struggles, unfulfilled needs, and deep pain which call for our compassion. We will then no longer feel strongly the need to judge our friends for not paying attention to us. It is easy to convince ourselves that we need all the attention.

Wouldn't it be better at such times to ask others we know who are isolated and lonely to come together and to share their stories so that they can discover how much we all have in common — and so become a source of consolation and comfort to each other? Instead, we keep hiding our deepest feelings from each other.

We suffer so much alone, but we also have great gifts of healing for each other. The mystery is that by hiding our pain we also hide our ability to heal.

Even in loving families and communities there is more suffering than necessary, more loneliness than necessary, because we don't want to bother someone when our "soul is downcast." We are called to talk to each other and to forgive each other, and in this way to discover the abundant mercy of God.

Lord, help me always to avoid unnecessary loneliness by sharing with others my pain and my joy.

ALASKA FUND

Copies of **The Orthodox Herald** go to Alaska each month. Helping are Olga Kovalenko, Nina Jaysnovitch, V. Rev. Peter Pritza, Natalie Kosich, William Mamay, Mitchell Morris, Ethel Watlock, Katherine Glory, Myra Matichak, Paul and Doris Rusinko, Mr. and Mrs. Aristides George Lazarus, Robert Roch for all the wonderful people he met in Alaska this year, Bez Imena. Parents and sister in memory of Christine Olga Hotrovich, Anon (3).

DROSS II

"Take away the **dross** from the silver and the smith has material for a vessel." Ps 25:4

Dross is the waste material generated in the smelting of silver or base metals (see Orth. Her. **33** p 66 1984). Along with worthless silicates, it contains an appreciable quantity of valuable metals. Dross is extensively processed today for residual metals but even in the ancient world the value was recognized and the waste was reworked for its valuable contents (Is 1:25). However, in the refining process (cupellation) silver and gold were not always obtained even though the residue had the appearance of silver. Today, we know that this "worthless" silver was platinum which was worthless to the ancient metallurgist; because even though it had the shine of silver and was very soft, it would not melt (m.p. 1774°C) or adhere to other metals.

Although the dross is primarily calcium silicates contaminated with lead, copper and tin oxides, it contains sufficient silver to be worth re-refining. Isaiah indicated that the dross was soluble in alkali (sodium or potassium hydroxides/carbonates) which would convert the base metal oxides to soluble stannates, zincates and plumbates and leave the silver and platinum metals behind. Ezekiel tells us that iron existed in dross and some scholars speculate that the metal might have been recovered by ancient metallurgists. However, there is no good evidence to support this hypothesis and since the recovery technology is complicated and was only discovered during the twentieth century, little credit can be given to this speculation. Nevertheless, the writings of the prophets indicate that the Biblical metallurgist knew much more practical Chemistry than normally given credit in Biblical commentaries.

What is most astonishing is the common use of metallurgical metaphors by the prophets. Many of these metaphors were not known to the general public, which leads one to speculate that either Isaiah or Ezekiel worked in a smelter sometime during their lifetime or they had access to technical information that was hid from the general public.

A study of the scriptural use of dross indicates that God's message is found everywhere. The use of technical knowledge by the prophets leads me to think of the famous passage in Ecclesiastes (3:02ff); "there is a time to be born, a time for love, a time to plant, a time of harvest, a time to weep, a time to laugh, a time to teach, a time to learn, a time for war, a time for peace, a time to hate and a time to die." Ecc 3:02 ff.

Larry R. Sherman, Ph.D.

PRESS FUND

Personal thanks, spasebo, to you who help us to keep publishing. Alexandra Spanovic, Nicholas Halecky, Olga Kovalenko, Nina Jaysnovitch, Natalie Kosick, Jewel Rhodes, John Hudak, Lawrence Grivna, Marjory Kiehl, John M. Peregrim, George Krishen, Bez Imena, Anna Balut, Mary Oyles, Paul and Doris Rusinko, Julia Stefanick, Myra Matichak, Katherine Glory, Irene Allen, Anonymous, V. Rev. Peter Pritza, Most Rev. Michael Kirkland, Aunt Anna Glovach, Mitchell Morris, Ethel Watloch, Mr. and Mrs. Aristides Lazarus, Helen Cudlic. Harry Gobora in memory of his mother, Catherine. Anon (8). Theodosia Jubinski in memory of John Priblo. Gloria Matlock in memory of Mary Homan. Helen Cudlic in memory of husband, George. Julia Polkabla in memory of her husband, John, who fell asleep in the Lord on Sept. 23, 1991. Fr. Deacon Joseph Hotrovich and Pani Olga and sister Ann Marie in memory of Christine Olga Hotrovich. Helen Lesko for prayers for health of her friend Pat Ruzsbatsky. Helen Cudlic for prayers for success of a relative's business.

•Kitchen Corner

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1 egg white

2 Tbls. water

Mix together oil and honey. Beat eggs and sugar until white and fluffy. Sift flour with baking powder and spices. Gradually add to egg mixture, mixing well after each addition. Add honey mixture. The dough should be stiff but not dry. Add more flour if needed. Chill for 1 hour in refrigerator. Roll small balls in the palms of hands and drop from teaspoon. Place on greased cookie sheet. Be sure there is enough room. They will spread. Bake in heated 350° oven for 15-20 minutes. Check after 10 minutes. They should not be overbaked. Soft, not crisp.

Meanwhile, boil sugar and water to make syrup. Beat egg white until stiff. Pour cooled syrup into the egg white, beating constantly. Dip the hot pyraniki into the glaze. Cool on wire tray placed over paper to catch drips. Makes 24 pyraniki.

PRETTY-PRETTY CHRISTMAS

During this Advent and Christmas season, we have been led to think of all the pretty-pretty aspects by excessively sentimental and commercial minds of the Birth of Our Lord and Saviour. What a pretty Christmas tree; what a pretty gift; how nice it's wrapped; how pretty your wreath is; how pretty the flowers look in the church!

Pretty is not wrong unless we make it the exclusive way we look upon the message and reality of Christmas. To set us on the right path of thinking we should read Psalm 97. In this we read the element of contrast to pretty-pretty as it describes the majesty of God's Kingdom. On the one hand, we find God is going to ride roughshod over those who worship false gods, who vaunt their idols. There is no question that today we have just as many people who worship false gods as did when the psalm was written.

When people don't get the action or response they want from God, they often set up their own cult/action and get the seeming approval they want. This can easily be seen as the over-emphasis on the humanity of Jesus Christ, or the Christmas tree or even on the creche.

Just what does God expect of us during this season? The psalm says let all those who serve carved images and who boast of idols be put to shame, and those who hate evil will be protected by the Lord.

We are told to "rejoice in the Lord" yet although many parishes have a series of services at Christmas aside from one service or perhaps not even that how much of the blessed Christmas season has really been spent in rejoicing in the Lord and praising His Holy Name? Many are too tired in doing all the pretty-pretties. The services in too many Orthodox Churches are sparsely attended during this Christmas period.

•St. Nicholas

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traumatic to learn that Santa Claus was not real — we suspected it from an early age — but St. Nicholas that is another thing!

•Look to the Glory

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we do long for it, and that we know our need. If we are living in the love of Jesus, He will reveal the truth to us.

Blessed is that discipline of disappointment by which the heart is purged, so that it shall rejoice to contemplate nothing but the glory of God!

•St. Joseph in Turmoil

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do. "And Joseph not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away quietly."

But then we read further in Matthew that an angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him not to be afraid to take Mary his wife. Joseph did not question the command from the Lord, he no longer agonized — he obeyed the Lord and the turmoil of decision making was over. He shortened the betrothal period and took Mary as his wife.

The last glimpses that we have of Joseph are also ones of immediate obedience. He took his family to Bethlehem so they could be numbered in the census. Then, he fled to Egypt to keep Jesus safe from the wickedness of Herod.

It is possible for us to obey our way out of many personal crises. If the will of God is clear in a situation, we should not hesitate to follow it. If the action we should take is not clear, we should wait prayerfully on the Lord until we have His guidance. What happens in a crisis is only destructive if we allow it to happen to us. We may not be able to prevent what is done to us, but we can, like Joseph, decide how we will react. We may allow the crisis to embitter us, or take it in stride, knowing that our life is ordered of the Lord and that He will use everything that happens to us to be for our good.

GOD IS OUR COMFORT

Life's experiences are at times not easily understood. When meeting the loss of someone dear to us or disappointment over some unexpected turn of events, we search for help and guidance through what can seem a tangled maze of pain and doubt. We yearn for love, support, and understanding.

As we turn to God and give Him the burden of our heart, His loving comfort is poured out upon us. God gives us the strength and courage to meet every experience and to take each step as it comes. If our thoughts race ahead to an uncertain future, God's love calms us and assures us that He is with us now and will be with us eternally. If we feel overwhelmed and unable to cope, God's support is given as steady encouragement and the promise of His continual help. As we trust in God to see us through, the long, dark night will give way to a bright, shining morning. One of my consoling prayers is:

"My hope is the Father, my refuge is the Son, my shelter is the Holy Spirit: O Holy Trinity our God, glory to Thee."

Dabs of Thoughts

The Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke carry accounts of the Nativity of Christ in their first chapters. St. Matthew writes from the point of Joseph while St. Luke is more from the point of Mary.

Many churches have Royal Hours on the day before Christmas. What meaning does the Royal have? Also what are Royal Doors? The adjective Royal was added during the very early centuries of the Church and reflects the imperial ceremonies of Constantinople. Royal hours are those during which the emperor was present for the whole service. Royal doors are the doors in the ikonastas in front of the altar table. The word royal here is given several explanations. First, they are called royal because the emperor, alone of all laymen, had the right to pass through them on certain special occasions. Another meaning given is that they are special, not only because ordained men can use them but through them comes the "King of all," the consecrated communion elements.

From writings from the 9th century it is found that Orthodox Christians fasted from November 15/28 until Christmas. But very little is found that there was very much liturgical preparation during these 40 days.

Relics of St. Nicholas are to be found in the St. Nicholas Shrine Church (Greek Orthodox) in Babylon, NY. They have been placed in a sculptured bronze reliquary given to the church in 1985 by Pope John Paul II. The church plan duplicates the original plan of the church of St. Nicholas in Myra, which is now in ruins in Turkey. In imitation of their beloved patron saint, the parishioners take an active part in charitable projects.

Wonder why the ikons on the ikonastas in some churches are not identified.

Quitters in the church are like motors — they sputter before they miss, and miss before they quit.

Many women enjoy shopping. They search for bargains like the wise woman in Psalm 31:18. "She perceives that her merchandise is good." KJ or "She watches for bargains." LB



EDITORS' NOTES

As this Christmas season draws near, we send you our love and greetings — Christ is Born! Glorify Him! The power of Christ's love reigns in our hearts, transforms our thoughts, and expresses itself in our actions. As we look forward to the miracle of Christmas each year, we are never disappointed.

We were happy to forward the Christmas stories which you sent to us during the past year to our friend. She made them into 14 booklets and has distributed them to hospices and nursing homes. The project is an ongoing one. Before you discard your magazines, won't you cut out any Christmas stories and send them to us to be used in our friend's project?

Many of our parishes have older people who are living alone. As the years go by their company for the Holy Days or invitations to visit become less frequent. Come Christmas Eve and the traditional supper, they are usually alone, and as years go by the meal becomes more and more spartan, and as one widow told us: "I just sit and cry on that day." At the same time, there are converts in the church who are not familiar with this custom, they are married young with both people working who can't prepare the foods. We are informed by more and more parishes that they plan the Holy Supper at the Church Hall, the committee prepares the tables, everyone brings one dish which is traditional. When they finish they go up to the church ready to meet the New-born King, feeling a part of a larger Christian family. Seniors get going — share your knowledge and your wisdom and pass on your traditions to the next few generations. For ideas call 717-256-7232.

Our neighbor called us a few days after the coup in the USSR. He was exuberant about the role religion played and said the prayers to the Lady of Fatima were answered. He was going to his church to thank Her for answering. His remarks got us thinking. During the time period, religion was under seige in the USSR. Many prayers were sent up by Orthodox Christians in congregation and privately. But now that the prayers have been answered, have thanks been expressed? We know of no formal or congregational prayers in the form of litanies or molebens. Please add some to your private prayers.

Again, we offer a packet of 10 copies of the **Herald** for $25 to be sent to one address for 12 months. Why not make a gift to your parish or former home parish, your religious education school, or your Ladies Guild. You will show your love and gratitude all year 'round. Your gift will not fade with the passing of the Christmas Season.

There is an old Christian tradition that God sends each person into the world with a special message to deliver, with a special song to sing for others, with a special act of love to bestow. No one else can speak our message, or sing our song or offer our act of love. These are entrusted to us.

According to this tradition, the message may be spoken, the song sung, the act of love delivered only to a few, or to all the people in a parish or in a small town, or to all the people in a large city or even to all the people in the whole world. It depends on God's unique plan for each person.

At this Holy Time of Christmas, when we are recalling the fact that God so loved the world that he sent His Son Jesus into the world for us, we want to say this to you: Your message has been heard in our hearts, your song has warmed our world, and your love has brightened our darkness. Thank you, thank you for your message, your song, your love, your help and concern.

God be with you,

Protopresbyter & Matushka Stroyen

MISSION FUND

Help us to keep sending "Heralds" to do mission work in areas other than Alaska. Thank you: Lawrence Grivna, Mary Scranton, Mr. and Mrs. Aristides Lazarus, Julia Stefanick, Katherine Glory, Mitchell Morris, Nina Jaysnovitch, Jack Arndt, Nina Karwatt, Bes Imena, Paul and Doris Rusinko, Myra Matichak, Ethel Watlock, Natalie Kosick, V. Rev. Peter Pritza, Olga Kovalenko. Parents and sister of Christine Olga Hotrovich in her memory, Anon (4).

ETHNIC CHUCKLE

Dorohaya Tyotya Marea,

Yak tam kolo vas? Toot shitko going OK. No yah mala takee experience. Yah dumala zhe yah scrazuyu. Tak Peeshlo.

A bunch of us dumalee zeh it would be very nice to go kolyadovatee. We decided to get the old costumes out of attics in the church and get dressed up yak kolee bullo. Me dostalee costumes, poh cleanovalee and did repairachki. Me got dressed nah Rustvo snd me peeshlee spevatee kolyadee.

Me malee takee fun. In each house ohne nas hostilee ee me went from house to house until preshlo dark. One of our parifionee z'mofovalee doh novee house nah suburbs and we tried to find it. Me hladalee ee hladalee. Soon we saw a police car coming. We became takee silly boh we were getting kindah cold ee wet. Me dumamohn pomozhe nam for sure. Ohn preshol doh nas eeh asked: "What you doing?" Me telling him zhe we looking for The Zamlansky house. Ohn asked: "What's the number and street?" Me neh znalee for sure boh Zamlansky nam gave directions ot causewaya. Policeman became suspicious eeh calloval police station eh druhee police car ee vans preshlee ee nas za bralee doh headquaters.

Ohnee nas asked za nashee ID's. Me neh malee boh me leaveovalee yu churchhall kolee me changovalee doh costumes. Then ohnee asked what we were celebrating Mardi Gra or Halloween. Then ohne povili nam zhe ohne budyut holding us for public nuisance. We were a little loud, giggly and rowdy ot fundavanya.

Suddenly, we decided — call our priest — he'll vouch for us! Me calovalee Fadera a ohn neh bull doma! To make matters worse some of our singers got sick from too much stress and too much hospitality!

Anyhow, finally everything got straightened out. Me spevalee kolyadee nah police station ee ohne collectovalee donation nah church. Me neh zabudem tot Christmas!

Thank you zah picture of your kolyadnekee. Yah brala picture of nas in our costumes ee yah peesluy vam nash picture next time.

Budtee Zdrovee,
Spevanka,
Hanya



Spice cookies are very popular all over Europe during the Christmas season. In Russia they are called Pyraniki and are still sold at bakery shops. Pyraniki date back to at least the 9th century when the recipe was a simple combination of rye flour, honey and berry juice. Spices were added in medieval Russia and they received their name from spice which means prynost. They remained in the same dense, unleavened, oversweet form until the end of the 19th century. Now they are less sweet and leavened and most resemble a spicy ginger cookie. There are over 40 varieties of pyraniki; each region seems to have its own version. They can be found flavored with vanilla, lemon and most popular after spices with mint. They can be found filled with jam, imprinted with a wooden stamp, baked in molds and glazed. They keep well and visitors to the Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg can find some very old preserved ones in the shapes of reindeer, horses, and roosters.

I received a note from a reader (N.S.) which read: "I am looking for the recipe for pyraniki. They have had some delicious spicy, glazed ones at a San Francisco bakery, but they are going out of business. My grown grandchildren have always loved this Russian treat and now my 2-year-old granddaughter is hooked. I am desperate to find a recipe but have had no luck."

Here is the recipe. It came from a Russian book. It may not be like the bakery ones, but I hope it is one your family enjoys.

Pyraniki (Spice Cookies)

1¾ cups flour
2 eggs
⅔ cup sugar
½ tsp. baking powder
2½ Tbls. honey
1 Tbl. oil
¼ tsp. each cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, cardamon
GLAZE:
½ cup + 1 Tbls. sugar

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December 1991

1. Eph. 6:10 - 17 - **Sunday**
2. 2 Tim 2:20-26
3. 3:16-4:4
4. 4:9-22
5. Titus 1:5-2:1
6. 1:15-2:10
7. Eph 1:16-23
8. Col 1:12-18 - **Sunday**
9. Heb 3:5-11,17-19
10. 4:1-13
11. 5:11-6:8
12. 7:1-6
13. 1 Cor 4:9-16
14. Eph 2:11-13
15. Col 3:12-16 - **Sunday**
16. Heb 8:7-13
17. 9:8-23
18. 10:1-18
19. 10:35-11:7
20. 11:8-16
21. Eph 5:1-18
22. 1 Tim 1:15-17 - **Sunday**
23. Heb 11:17-23,27-31
24. 12:25-26, 13:22-25
25. 13:17-21
26. James 1:19-27
27. 2:1-13
28. 2 Tim 1:18-28
29. Col 3:4-11 - **Sunday**
30. James 2:14-26
31. 3:1-10

BIBLE STUDY

The reading from James 1:1-18 contains one of the most difficult concepts to be translated into the reality of our lives. James never suggested to his readers that Christianity would be an easy way for them. Many of us have learned to see in trials a means of maturing spiritually because our faith in God grows as we trust His wisdom in difficult times. But to count trials as pure joy is quite another thing. Yet as we make our way up the spiritual ladder, this is a part of our heritage that we must enter into fully.

We live in a complex world. Believers as well as unbelievers are caught up in disappointments, betrayals of trusts, political unrest, moral pollution, and endless questions of what to do as new perplexities arise. But the difference between believers and unbelievers in God lies in how each handles similar trials.

There will be trials of sorrows and disappointments which will seek to take our faith away; to make unbelievers of believers. There will be the unpopularity which the Christian way must so often meet. But these trials are not meant to make us fall; they are to make us soar. They are not meant to defeat us; they are meant to be defeated. They are not meant to make us weaker; they are meant to make us stronger. Therefore, we should not complain about them; we should rejoice, find true joy in them.

The Christian, or believer, is like an athlete. The heavier the course of training he takes on, the more he is glad because he knows that it is making him more fit, more strong.

By following God's advice for handling trials, we train to become more mature and complete. The joy comes when we recognize that God is always there for us. (James 1:4)

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MEMORIES THAT SUPPORT

Thank you, Father, for memories that support us in the present moment. All our memories are important to us. They are a part of our very being. Our effectual memories are most precious, and we can choose to bring these experiences forth. We can choose to think on the good, the loving, and the peaceful parts of our past. This choice is always ours, and you can choose the better part.

You need not deny the fact that you may have less than pleasant memories of the past. Nevertheless, you do not have to choose to dwell on such memories. If such a memory comes forth into your conscious mind, make every effort to bless it with love and return it to its place as a past experience. Cease to think in terms of bad memories, and go forward convinced that you can be all that you want to be and all that God has designed for you to be.

Give thanks to God for memories. Your memories can support you in the now, where you choose to live happily. The proverbs tell us in 10:7: "The memory of the righteous is a blessing."